

Sexual attitudes, preferences and infections in Ancient Greece: has antiquity anything useful for us today?

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"The ultimate control of venereal diseases lies outside the direct influence of the venereologist and will be both slow and difficult to achieve." S M Laird (1958)¹

Abstract

Modern society bears a heavy burden of medico-social pathology particularly amongst its young. The size, nature and costs of the sexually transmitted disease element is now considerable and dwarfs such successes as have been achieved. In the belief that the structure of a society and the way that structure functions determines the size of its STD problem, a review of Ancient Greek society has been undertaken. Greek society, not least concerning all aspects of sex, was well ordered, frank and tolerant. Some of the areas of Greek society's structure and functioning which differ most markedly from ours, and seem to have determined a modest STD problem, are highlighted and discussed. Greek ideas that might be adapted to match today's needs are presented for consideration.

Introduction

In spite of Laird's pessimism and contrary trends in the prevalence of other manifestations of medico-social pathology, the venereal diseases—syphilis, chancroid and gonorrhoea—have been subjected to varying degrees of control. Over the last 30 years in several Western countries including the United Kingdom, this control has been mainly due to medical endeavours. The same cannot be said about second generation sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and today's health workers. Laird's aphorism should prompt serious consideration.

Societies have been slow to recognise social and behavioural determinants of medico-social pathology. Not surprisingly, therefore, the rapid changes in any society's structure and how it functions to precipitate costly problems is little appreciated.

Economic status offers an example. *The Black Report* (1982)² and Richard Smith's *Unemployment and Health* (1987)³ lay great stress on poverty as a dominating determinant. Too few appear to have noted that prosperity, as well as poverty, determines high prevalence rates of such medico-social phenomena as crime, alcoholism, suicide and STDs.⁴ Could it be true that there is a factor common to both poverty and prosperity? Could it be that Western societies are a long way off recognising that we are failing to fit our young, in the Darwinian sense, to match modern society and its rapid changes?

That changes in the structure and function of societies can reduce medico-social problems, by altering attitudes and behaviour, is only beginning to become clear. The well-documented evidence in Britain that lung cancer prevalence can be reduced by giving up tobacco is being imitated elsewhere. Australia's lead for acceptance of car seat belts and Sweden's alcohol-free driving rules are being slowly adopted and adapted in other countries. History shows that greater awareness of the costs, personal and societal, of high prevalence rates of medico-social problems is a potent adjuvant in the promotion of prevention. Education of both professionals and public has also proved a useful tool, with the law only being employed when a society's majority has accepted the changes as offering amelioration.

But some problems are very different and, to date, too difficult. We have, for example, made little or no progress with immigration problems and racism. Nowhere can one find blueprints or reports detailing the personal and social resources necessary for successful endeavours in this field. How did the Indians, invited by the British empire builders, do it in Uganda? Why have the Chinese been so successful in abolishing racism in Singapore? Why, until recently, were the immigrant Scots so commonly and universally appointed to leadership roles? That such widely accepted observations remain undocumented, that is, anecdotal, is one measure of modern man's lack of social consciousness.

Such thoughts have prompted the question—if Laird is right, and he seems to be, where are we to start if our aim is to control the STDs? Have any of the societies of the past so ordered their structure and

function that, in terms of attitudes and behaviour, the prevalence of STDs was modest and manageable?

What about the Ancient Greeks? Can they teach us anything that might be useful?

Ancient Greece—an overview

The period known as the Dark Ages of Ancient Greece began in about 1100BC. During this period the poet Homer composed *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, giving details of the Trojan War, while Hesiod the historian provided a history of the gods. The Archaic period followed and lasted from 750–500BC. It saw kings replaced by nobles and subsequently overthrown by tyrants supported by the people. In 594BC, Solon, ruler of the city state of Athens, granted a constitution—the first step towards true democracy. It is the Classical period, 500–336BC which is so redolent with the names and writings of philosophers, politicians and playwrights and showed so clearly how democracy worked. Out of this developed the Golden Age in the arts and learning led by Athens. Wars and many battles between the city states finally led to them being united under King Philip of the northern state of Macedonia. The Hellenistic period (336–146BC) is dominated by Philip's son, Alexander the Great, who conquered and established a Greek empire stretching from Egypt to India. With Alexander's demise the empire was divided between his generals. By this time the Romans were establishing their own empire and soon included the Greek colonies in Italy and eventually Greece itself.^{5,6}

Our interest concerns mainly Greek's classical period when its city states were at their most efficient and effective.

Greek society—political, economic and social

In the classical period, most Greek city states from Macedonia in the north to Sparta in the south, had governments democratically elected by the citizens. Excluded from citizenship were all women, foreigners and slaves whether bond or freed. Slaves were usually prisoners of war with their families and therefore varied in education and social background. The states were small enough to allow most men to attend assemblies, usually held three or four times per month. All were encouraged to speak and vote. The matters discussed were those submitted to, and selected by, a council. In Athens this was a group of 500 men, 50 from each of 10 tribes. Each councillor served for one year and the tribes took it in turn to lead the council.

Political decisions were made in the public forum. Citizens revelled in the freedom to theorise and reason with their fellows in public as well as in private. The high degree of personal involvement was the essence of Greek democracy. It functioned on the principle that "us" was preferred to "them".

Freedom to do as one pleased went hand in hand with respect for the magistrates and for the laws. Men were conscious that their everyday comportment was as important as their contributions. To break the laws, discussed and voted on, meant admitted shame.⁵⁻⁷

As regards economic affairs, well-organised farming and fishing ensured a good standard of living for all states. Neither great wealth nor abject poverty were common. Athens' relative prosperity owed much to the discovery of silver in the Laureion mines. A great deal of it was spent building a fleet to counter the threat of a Persian invasion. Silver coins were later introduced. Not a little went into fine buildings, art and education in its widest sense. Thus many Athenians had, and took opportunities to learn, and go on to give expression to their natural gifts.⁵⁻⁷

A Greek state's success was not measured by its wealth but how such resources were used for the common good. Thus in political as well as economic terms, a state's respected institutions, the integrity of its scientific endeavours and standards in all forms of artistic creativity gave a clear measure of the success of its aims, decisions and endeavours. Politically and economically, Greek society manifests the hallmarks of success—something is attempted and the outcome is favourable.

But there is more to Greek achievement. The same positive and personal approach and involvement featured in the structure and function of family and social life.⁷ All Greeks, both men and women, in classical times, saw themselves as belonging to their city state or polis, obligated to it and no less to their fellow citizens. The family or *oikos* was the basic social unit.⁸ Dedication to its past, present and future good name determined more than any other factor how Greek societies were structured and how each society functioned.⁹ Both family and society may be described as gender segregated. In the home the wife and mother ruled supreme.¹⁰ All obeyed and honoured her. Her heavy duties were undertaken by servants and slaves. Husbands dealt with all outdoor activities concerning the family's property.¹¹ Marriage was popular, with family excellence sought and highly regarded. Nowhere in Greek plays, for example, do we find the family demeaned or ridiculed. Men usually married around the age of 30 and women in their late teens or earliest twenties, that is, when both parties had completed their adolescence and education.^{5,12} Such factors were seen as enhancing the chances of marital harmony and family stability. Men could divorce their wives by sending them away. Women had to act through an official.

Girls received most of their education within the home. Boys' schooling started seriously about the age of six or seven and continued till at least 15 years of age. At 18 a boy was a full citizen and undertook two years military service. Philosophers set up schools or

gymnasia for further education. In these establishments there was great emphasis on physical fitness, social involvement and development of an ability to discuss and dispute in a rational way in public. It was the disparity in education which determined that men of all ages spent most of their time in the company of other men and women much of their day with other women.^{7 11}

Social and intellectual education of young people from an early age was aimed at committing them to thoughtful attitudes and behaviour. Thus personal involvement in all aspects of family and social life was the norm. It was said to account for the fact that so many Greeks maintained a youthful zest for life often into old age.¹² In Plato's *Timaeus* an Egyptian priest has the line "You (Greeks) are all young in your minds".¹³ Such records and writings as are available to us show little distress and preoccupation with aberrant behaviour amongst young people. When compared with today's common exhibitions of sullen lethargy and angry frustration, often associated with high prevalence rates of suicide and crimes against people and property, Ancient Greek society was relatively successful.

Marriage and sexuality

The city state of Athens was the first to adopt monogamy. Elsewhere it occasionally co-existed with concubinage.

Marriage was popular and divorce uncommon. A wife's fidelity, like her general deportment and supremacy in the home, commanded respect. It was jealously guarded since legitimacy of offspring alone ensured entailment of property and the future of the all-important family.¹⁴

The physical side of marriage was subordinated to the ethical. Lustfulness in private, as in public, was not encouraged. Couples shared a bed two or three times per month,¹⁰ apparently following the sayings of the sages in this as in other areas—"Moderation is best" and "Nothing in excess".¹⁵ The law allowed a man to kill his wife's lover. On occasion his refusal to do so could result in withdrawal of his civil rights if the circumstances suggested that he was putting his own wishes before the common good.¹⁵ Any sexual liaison with a servant or slave by a married man or woman was regarded not just as bad form but demeaning and unseemly. Adultery with a free woman was also regarded as foolish and was dealt with sternly. Some regarded it as also unnecessary since several socially acceptable alternatives were available.

Older men having regular sex with "a friendly companion"—regular mistress, concubine or courtesan—was acceptable behaviour. In later times it became a commoner pattern of behaviour amongst the sons of the rich. Persons indulging in casual sex

outside marriage were regarded as indulging in risky behaviour and could be denied access to temples. There was, however, no rigid standard of sexual behaviour. There is no doubt that the high standing of the family was a potent determinant of the sexual mores in Athens particularly. Education for reasonable, acceptable and responsible sexual behaviour was based on the principle that the corporate good took precedence over personal desire.¹⁶

Religion and sexuality

The relative liberalism of Greek sexuality no doubt owed something to the behaviour of the mythological gods and goddesses.^{17 18} Zeus, for example, had countless sexual liaisons with both mortals and immortals. By Maia he had his son Hermes who in turn had a son by Aphrodite (Venus) called Hermaphrodite, the Greek symbol of bi-sexuality.

The cult of the phallus initiated religious practices similar to those associated with the Egyptian god Min and the Indian god Siva. Representations of the phallus were carried in religious processions, to the temples to Priapus, as the sacred organs of generation. They signified power, fruitfulness and fertility.^{19 20}

Aphrodite was also widely worshipped. Two temples to her are worthy of special mention; one at the famous hospital at Epidaurus.²¹ The other, showing her in effigy and stepping from her bath, is in the temple of Aesculapius on the island of Cos,²² home of Hippocrates. Some temples to Aphrodite adopted the temple prostitution of India by recruiting abandoned daughters.²³ These temples claimed to teach self-surrender under the guise of religious grace. The practice had official recognition.

Offending the gods invited disaster. Herodotus the historian, in his book *Clio* of 450BC, recalls how Aphrodite revenged herself by sending a sexual infection to visit the Scythians when they desecrated one of her temples.²⁴ To an Ancient Greek such visitations were as real as the offence.

Art and sexuality in classical Greece

Athenians in particular viewed the concept of art and its appreciation as a part of social education.³ Physical beauty was not confined to painting or statuary or architecture. Its personal achievement in a well-proportioned body and its display at the gymnasia and games was an essential part of the good life and the Greek ideal. It was believed that nudity expressed and projected an aura of strength and character as well as eroticism. That Greek standards in art were high is clear from the statuary and buildings they have left to us and which find further expression in inscriptions on fragments of vases and the texts of their plays.¹² The Greeks make it clear that sexuality

like art is part of daily life, to be pursued with propriety and with the common good in mind.¹⁶

Contraception

At various times over the centuries the Ancient Greeks took seriously and publicly discussed both over- and under-population as a topical problem.²⁵ In general they restricted their family to two or three children only. How was this small family size achieved? Nowhere in Greek literature do we find any mention of coitus interruptus or to anything resembling a condom. Barrier methods were restricted to balls of wool impregnated with a variety of materials, including oils, vinegar, honey, white lead, cedar tree gum, alum and peppermint. About 100 plants are listed as having contraceptive properties. Magic amulets were recommended by some.²⁵ Non-procreative sexuality such as oral and anal sex are rarely mentioned in Greek writings and never in this context.

Infant mortality in antiquity has been estimated at ten times that for the United Kingdom today.²⁵ No doubt the marrying age of men also made a significant contribution. Plato, who viewed coitus as a morbid condition, saw it as fit only for breeding. Hippocrates on the other hand, recommended frequent sex in conditions due to an excess of phlegm. He believed that this excess of morbid secretions was best utilised to replace losses of semen.²⁶

Abortion

All aspects of spontaneous abortion seem to have been well understood in classical times. Greek views on induced abortion paid heed to the view taken of the foetus.²⁷ The Stoics, for example, saw it as another organ of the expectant mother's body. Some philosophers cautioned that such views would encourage criminal abortion. Plato, and later Aristotle, counselled abortion on social as well as medical grounds. There was a consensus view that abortion procured after four and a half months should be a punishable offence.^{28 29} For Greek societies in southern Asia abortion was always punishable. In other states it was only so if the foetus was male. A single girl who became pregnant not only brought disgrace and dishonour to her family but could find herself banished or legally sold into slavery. There seems little doubt that abortion was permitted, tolerated and not uncommonly counselled as wise, for social reasons.²⁸

The methods used to procure abortion were puncture of the membranes, intra-uterine injections, pessaries, tampons, potions, plasters, fumigations and any one of between 100²⁸ and 200³⁰ listed abortifacients. Haemorrhage and infection caused abortion to be recognised as life-threatening. Little

wonder therefore that Hippocrates advised his colleagues to have nothing to do with it and so its prohibition became part of the Oath that bears his name.

Sexual practices and preferences

Reading the researches and writings of scholars and non-scholars about sexuality in all ages and places leaves one in no doubt that the subject, in terms of attitudes and behaviour, is always complex and more often than not determined by social changes of a general nature.³¹ Masturbation exhibits this.³² Some religions have condemned it as evil, and fallacious explanations and prognostications have engendered much misery, guilt and fear throughout recorded history. In the case of Ancient Greece some have seen the Greeks as actually encouraging it but a more balanced view is that this line misinterprets tolerance. The Greeks saw masturbation in men and women as neither a vice nor a virtue but simply as a natural substitute for sexual intercourse. Some appear to have regarded it as a social safety valve preventing sexual anxieties, illegitimacy, suicide and illegal sexual behaviour.¹⁶ Recordings of rape and cases of sadomasochism are singularly absent from such Greek writings as are available to us.¹⁵ Such social views and the dominating role of procreative sexuality within the oikos are clearly in keeping with the acceptance of masturbation as biologically normal.

It seems clear also that Greek societies recognised and tolerated in varying degrees all forms of sexual activity. It viewed only with apprehension those who practised one form to the exclusion of others. Any excess was suspect.¹⁵ Thus satyriasis was viewed as unhealthy and concupiscence in women risked the wrath of Aphrodite.

Tolerance of homosexuality was graded according to its form and content.³³ Much the same may be said about attitudes towards prostitution.¹⁰ Public exhibitions of either and monetary considerations tempered tolerance.

Prostitution

It was Solon (c 640–560BC) in the Archaic period who established the first state licensed brothel or dicterion in Athens. Some praised him, seeing the new public service as an antidote to war and homosexuality and a form of protection for women. Some reproached him because Athens and eventually other city states drew large profits from the brothels.¹⁰

The Greeks recognised (*de facto* if not *de jure*) three classes of prostitute:^{31 34}

(a) *Dicteriades*—These were brothel-based slaves or show girls. They were obliged to wear distinctive

dress and hair style. Some trained and bettered themselves.

(b) Auletrides—These were a superior grade with entertaining skills such as dancing and flute playing.

(c) Hetairai—These were the top class. Many had wit, beauty, intelligence and learning and as courtesans made their way into positions of power. This was so, for example, in the case of Pericles' Aspasia and Alexander the Great's Thais who later married his general Ptolemy, ruler of Egypt.³⁵

Temple prostitution also existed and the facility at Corinth was said to be very expensive.^{24 31}

Many Greeks over the centuries patronised prostitutes openly. Nevertheless there were those who saw resort to a bawdy house or dicterion as disdainful. At best they viewed it as only marginally better and safer than seeking casual clandestine pleasure.

Male prostitutes to serve homosexual men could be arranged by procurers, usually called pandars. Well recognised trysting places existed in Athens. Castrated temple boys served others, as did catamites or male homosexual transvestites. These young men, called pathics or cinaedi by the Greeks, generally operated for money and so warranted condemnation.^{12 15 16}

Homosexuality

Lesbians or tribades, whether or not bi-sexual, were, like bi-sexual men, well accepted by Greek societies.

Sodomy, meaning copulation by adult males was illegal. Such activity between equals was unacceptable. In this regard it is noteworthy that there is no instance of it occurring amongst the immortals.

The term paedophilia was used by the Greeks to refer to sexual longing to enjoy the company of a "beardless youth".¹² The term paederastia has been increasingly used to describe the homo-erotic attachment of a teenage male with a young adult male. Such attachments had a very special form, place and role in Greek society. They were not only tolerated but accepted, although overlapping views existed and have been long debated.^{33 35}

Friendships not unnaturally sprang up in the gymnasia.¹² No doubt teenagers admired and some hero-worshipped their seniors who in turn responded. It was reminiscent of the hero/warrior worship of Homer's poems.³⁵ Older students had responsibilities for the development of younger students. To seek renown was part of the Greek ideal. Relationships were no doubt strengthened by the processes of encouragement and response in terms of physical prowess, learning and debate. Where seeking and gaining physical and intellectual renown was dominant it seems hardly surprising that some friendships came to have a physical element. The boy became the passive, beloved or eromenos and the young man, the active lover or erastes. Thus learning

and accepting and practising together the manly virtues of Greek society—physical courage as well as athletic skill, respect for truth as well as learning and a fearless sense of justice as well as debating skill—gave the partnership model a role not only as support but, as giving heightened value to the Greek ideal. It was more than camaraderie. For some it took the form of an exclusive, clubbable élite.³⁵ For most, these homo-erotic liaisons are seen as the source of what has been called the Greek miracle, characterised not least by a zestful sense of youthful adventure and ever-growing and refreshing intellectualism.

This model was also seen as making a positive contribution to the stability of marriage and family life. There seems little doubt that this restricted and institutionalised form of homosexuality was also viewed as a temporary phase, part of growing up. Some older men indulging in it tended to excuse themselves on grounds of what they called "momentary forgetfulness". For the younger ones their role came to be seen as a juvenile activity, little different in its social significance to masturbation.^{12 35}

In the late Classical period its critics, including middle ranking men, seem to have been keen to emulate the ways of the so-called élite.³⁵ There was a trend urging a return to recognition of the Homeric hero for his beauty, strength, courage and dominance in a variety of socially significant roles. Lack of dominance in terms of oikos and polis as well as battle was a poor example. Effeminacy in males was seen as likely to undermine confidence in all forms of family and social dependants.²⁷

Sexually transmitted diseases in Ancient Greece

The concept of social or sexual contact as a factor in sickness was embryonic in pre-Hippocratic times. Vague analogies were drawn regarding the role of seeds in botany.³⁶ Hippocrates carried the idea forward in his books *On the Nature of Man* and *On Epidemics*. He noted that just as Greece had imported sexual mores and practices from Asia and Egypt, so also had it imported associated diseases.

A wide range of genital ulcers in men, more than women, was described by the Greek physicians.³⁷ Onibasius described dry ulcers. Hippocrates described small moist ulcers in men and women which read like genital herpes.³⁸ Descriptions of phagedenic ulcers with their associated pain and destructive nature strongly suggest chancroid. The favourite therapy for ulcerations of the genitals was myrrh and frankincense boiled in sweet wine and applied as soaks.

Frequent descriptions of "morbid outgrowths" and "genital excrescences" affecting both sexes equate with genital warts. The Greeks called them ficus (figs)³⁹ and treated them surgically.²⁴

The rash of a disease called spora strongly suggests

scabies. Its severe and chronic form seems to have caused diagnostic confusion with leprosy in some patients.³⁹

By the fourth century BC, gonorrhoea had already been recognised by many as sexually acquired for some 1000 years. Moses had recognised it as such and dealt with it not curatively but epidemiologically.⁴⁰ Hippocrates described the abnormality of urinary flow associated with urethral discharge. He believed the disease existed deep in the generative organs. This view found support in the art of urinoscopy, newly imported from Mesopotamia via the Greek colony in Alexandria about 450BC.⁴¹ Gonorrhoea in women was not readily recognisable. It was believed to be a cause of chronic ill-health.

There is evidence to support the view that vulvovaginal candidiasis was not uncommon in the 4th century BC.^{37 42}

Many attempts have appeared in the literature suggesting that syphilis occurred in Ancient Greece.^{24 37 43} None of the descriptions of ulcers or their associated rashes corresponded with any form of treponematoses. Some ingenious efforts have been made to interpret a wide variety of conditions as syphilis. They too can be dismissed.

Unlike Moses in earlier times, no evidence has been found that the Greeks ever thought it necessary to invoke the law for the control of STDs.

One is left after detailed review with two impressions. In classical Greece communicable genital and peri-genital conditions were no commoner than similarly located fungal infections and tuberculosis. Secondly, the prevalence of both communicable and non-communicable genital disease was modest.

From what has been said about the size and nature of a country's STD problem being dictated by the social structure of a society this is not surprising.

Discussion

The structure of Greek society and how its various elements functioned contrasts strikingly with its modern Western counterparts. Although we now have a more liberal definition of citizenship, personal involvement in the policy and decision making processes of politics is much reduced. Our democracies are adjectivally qualified as "parliamentary". This continues in spite of the availability of technology that would allow every citizen to vote on every issue. Implementing unqualified democracy would certainly alter the structure of today's societies. Whether the subsequent personal involvement would make for more efficient and effective functioning, as it did in the Greek states, is unknown. Does the social state of our societies not suggest that pilot studies are due?

Sociologists with their historical perspectives and scientifically based facts and figures leave us in no

doubt that the family as a social force today is in disarray. We produce a growing minority of young people who by their exhibitions of social ineptitude and emotional distress declare that they have been ill-fitted to match ever-changing modern society. They run away from home to live in degradation, they commit crimes against people and property, commit suicide or make suicide attempts, fail to use contraceptives and call for abortions, indulge in substance abuse and hooliganism, and need much care for sexual infections. The misery and costly consequences of all this medico-social pathology is beginning to cause concern. There is a feeling in some quarters that the family over the past 30 years has been showing itself as increasingly inadequate. This it is said applies both to its role in prevention and as a support for victims.⁴⁴ Smaller families, more widely scattered families and less clearly defined roles within families are said to compound the difficulties. Although family bonding is said to be as strong as ever, some think family obligations to dependants are less often and less willingly fulfilled and the children of the divorced also question the view. Although the family as a civilising, socialising and sophisticating force is constantly demographically detailed and debated, little of a practical or political nature has happened that might contribute to its renewal. Should potential parents be taught parenting? Should divorce be made more difficult by obliging warring parents to seek professional counselling? Should married people with children receive more financial help than single parents? Should fathers have the same rights as mothers to their children? How do we make the interests of the children paramount?

These family-based problems and the questions they prompt were largely avoided by the Greeks. If the family was the egg they saw marriage as the hen and were sure it came first. They were in no doubt that marriage could best be successfully accomplished by mature adults. For females this meant marrying in the late teens or early twenties and for males around 30 years of age. Their definitions of maturity have not been bettered. Today we define adolescence in females as 12 to 21 years and in males, 14 to 25 years. That girls mature earlier not only physically and intellectually, but emotionally and sexually and that boys take so much longer to mature is not widely recognised today.

The Greeks would not be surprised, therefore, at our high divorce rates. They would have confidently forecast the one in three failure rate of marriages of adolescents. Little wonder that today, women especially have become disillusioned with marriage. The idea, widely canvassed 30 years ago, that "living together first" would improve the chances of success in marriage has proved an illusion for many. Although young people are tending to marry later, this is

apparently not late enough to offer hope of rising success rates.

It is an everyday observation in STD clinics that many mature young women make a serious commitment to marriage to adolescent males. After a child or two and a sexual infection or two they divorce them. Some admit that they have married an adolescent instead of a man. Rarely an abandoned youth sees himself as an ill-used adolescent.

Can modern women who wish to combine career and marriage better their prospects? Would it help if their earlier intellectual maturation was generally recognised and their secondary schooling so organised that they were educated with boys a year or two older? Capitalising on their earlier maturity and education by training at technical college or university would see them well qualified at 21 years of age. The choice of career or marriage or both could then be made unhurriedly and confidently. Hopefully under this structure more and more mature and educated young women would choose to marry not adolescents, but mature men with near identical aspirations, in terms of careers, marriage and family.

Such promise of improved prospects for marriage and the family would of course leave us with much the same problems as the ancient Greeks. Not least would be what to do about the sexual drives of adolescent males. The Greek solution of pseudo-homosexuality is unlikely to find wide acceptance today in spite of any potential it may have for cultural creativity in art, science and learning generally. The pill has made heterosexual liaisons popular and more attractive. What would be the result if the mature and educated young male partners of Greek times were replaced today by mature and educated young female partners. Could they harness and utilise adolescent male erotic energy for the common good as Greek men did? Could women bring us to an age of classical Greek reason of that self-reflective sort that was later to be encapsulated in Aristotle's "Know thyself"? Are women as capable as men in bringing out the best in male adolescents? Does the current "toy-boy" cult suggest that some may be willing to try?

At a more practical level could the proposed form of heterosexual cohabitation match the Greek model in terms of prevention of abortions, STDs and divorces? Modern contraception and education certainly have the potential to make this a possibility.

Many who have in recent times supported moves to relax social and sexual restraints now complain that a growing minority treat liberalism as licence and create problems. In the history of the U.K. parallels can be drawn with other eras of prosperity such as Tudor times and the 18th century. In both these cases mounting costly miseries, personal, familial and societal, prompted men to cry "Enough!" Thus came Cromwell's puritanical commonwealth and, in the 19th century, the rigidity of

Victorianism.⁴ (Doubters of the inevitability of this cycle need only look to its modern equivalent in the Levant.)

This kind of over-reaction, it is suggested, is liable to occur when men alone deal with such situations. Women have been in the forefront of the revolutionary changes in the structure of Western societies for more than the last quarter century. Are they willing to accept that with sex equality now well established they have an obligation to join men in ensuring that the new structure functions effectively and efficiently? Are women consciously preparing themselves for the kind of sustained social commitment that is needed if we are to match the well ordered nature of classical Greek society? Can they bring themselves to join men in putting the corporate good before personal desire in the interests of social health? If they leave it all to men again they risk regret.

Like Laird's aphorism, this historical perspective seeks to do no more than re-identify the problem and prompt discussion. If you think the Greeks have nothing to offer—who has?

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